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Chapter 1 by Owen Stansifer

The pain. The pain of so many things, Monaco. Her beautiful green, blue, and gray scales, like a beacon shining at night still flashed in his eyes. Then her slow demise, the poison flowing through her veins, pumping through her heart.

He flashed awake, his body tense. He looked around and saw the empty track field, no trainees this late in the day. He grabbed his bag from the bench and started to head home. He was sweaty and tired. He was worn out from the terror and other feelings ripping through him during the last vision. The biggest question in his chaotic brain was, "When will the next one come and how long will it last?" He looked at his watch, it read 19:30. Ailman walked towards the door. He then stopped and took a moment to look at the door. It was a large set of double doors and a huge brass bar facing horizontally. The ornate doors were easily twenty or twenty five feet tall and made of a deep brown wood that was probably some exotic rare species of tree specially grown and copied for this particular configuration. The doors opened silently and the lights turned off behind him when he left the indoor track field. The walkway from the track field to the gym was about a quarter mile long and twenty feet wide. The sides had little foot by foot water streams lit up from the inside casting an eerie and almost mystical glow that you might

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very far away. Does this mean something? Ailman looked around, but he was utterly alone. might as well keep going, after a moment he reached a split in the path to the gym, one path lead two or three miles or so to a place called "the city" by the locals. The City was a hard place, it was actually part of and actual city called Ivesdale. The City was a very run down center of shops, bars and homes. Anybody who knew anything about the city knew that it was a dangerous place, very few people could survive for very long on the streets, being in a gang or being a powerful and dangerous person were the only ways to be safe, creatures, gangs, and psychos roamed at night and during daytime. Night was a time where you usually were inside or endanger, sometimes both. The local police force was a tough group but would only handle the richest areas where crimes were fewest. Ailman in particular had many acquaintances, mostly police, bar keepers, and shop owners. Being one of the few people that could shoot a gun and had moral values. Often enough he would run into a situation where the police were nowhere to be found. In these situations he would stop the problem long enough for the police to show up. He didn't have a job but made enough money by helping drunks out of the bars. Every time he would guide some rowdy or drunk man out of the bars the barkeepers would give him more or less money depending on the size of the man and how drunk he was. It was actually quite profitable. By looking closer to twenty than seventeen soon to be eighteen, Ailman passed as a dangerous looking and strong man. This helped in many situations. Suddenly the lush greenery turned into buildings, some crumbling to ruin others new and strong, not ready to fall. As Ailman took in the surrounding change he stopped, took his shirt off and switched it for a green sleeveless shirt. He also looked around to make sure that no one was in sight, all clear. Then he pulled out a black, thin belt that had a built in holster and sword sheath. The sword was discreetly hidden by the backpack and the gun was too small to be seen under his shirt and black cargo pants. Closing and putting on his backpack he thought there was a series of gun shots from the city but dismissed it as nothing unusual that concerned him in any way. He sped up so he could hit his favorite bar for a few bucks. Every step was smooth and quiet, like liquid flowing silently under the night sky. The particular clubs Ailman was going to was largely considered one of the best in the nearby area, the only downfall was the size. The club, GO Time was a tiny club because the club owner and keeper did not want to have to deal with the

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and nobody noticed him. He nodded to the two bouncers and recognizing him they stepped apart with comfortable repetition.

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